

Rev. Caleb Evans

from his friend &c

The author

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THE
MILITARY
HISTORY
OF
THE
UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
FROM
1776 TO
1865
BY
GEO. F. R. MASON

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CHARITY

Andover Newton Theological Library
Considered in Newton Centre
Massachusetts

A

SERMON

PREACHED

At CHARLES-TOWN, June 24, 1785,

BEFORE THE

MOST ANCIENT

AND

HONORABLE SOCIETY

OF FREE AND ACCEPTED

MASONS.

And published at their unanimous Request.

By SAMUEL STILLMAN, A. M.

Pastor of the first Baptist Church in Boston.

BOSTON:
Printed by T. and J. FLEET.

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*AT a Meeting of King Solomon's Lodge in ample form,
at Free Mason's Hall, in Charlestown, on the Festival
of St. JOHN the Baptist, 5785.*

The Rt. Worshipful JOSIAH BARTLETT, in the Chair.

Voted unanimously,

THAT our Brethren, Capt. *Joseph Cordis*, Capt. *Eliphalet Newell*, Capt. *Benjamin Frothingham*, Capt. *William Calder*, and Mr. *Caleb Swan*, be a Committee to wait upon the Rev. Messrs STILLMAN and THACHER, with the Thanks of the Lodge for their public services this Day; and to request of Mr. STILLMAN a copy of his Sermon for the press.

Extract from the Records,

Attest. ISAAC SNOW, Secretary.

Gentlemen,

I AM fully sensible of the honor done me by your approbation of the Sermon delivered yesterday; which you manifest by requesting a copy of it for the press—A desire of contributing, though in the smallest degree, toward the encouragement of that *Charity*, that is the bond of perfectness, and one end of your institution, was the motive that led me to compose and preach it: with the same desire I now consent to the publication of it.

I am, Gentlemen,

With every sentiment of esteem,

Your obedient humble Servant.

SAMUEL STILLMAN.

Boston, June 25, 1785.

Charity considered.

I CORINTHIANS, xiii. 1, 2, 3.

Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

IN the preceding chapter our apostle enumerates and commends spiritual gifts, as having their respective uses; and finishes it by saying, *yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.* By which, it is plain, he means charity; in the celebration of which he employs the whole of the chapter in which the text is. Charity then is of indispensable importance: Let us proceed to consider it in its *nature, objects, and influence.*

I. This

I. This term is often used by us when we mean *catholicism* ; or that temper of kindness and forbearance, that christians of different religious sentiments, should encourage toward one another. We say a man is charitable, who is willing, that others should think for themselves, and worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, however widely they may differ from him. He has learned to distinguish the *man* from his *religious opinions* ; and is convinced that there are wise and good men among the several denominations of christians. A spirit of intolerance he condemns with just severity, and feels kindly affectioned to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, by whatever name they may be called.

Sometimes by charity we mean that kind affection for objects in distress, which prompts us to run to their relief. We say a man is charitable, who is ever ready to distribute to the necessitous.

But in the text, I apprehend, that the apostle means by it, that love to God, and love to man that is the fulfilling of the law. The original word is thus rendered and applied throughout the sacred scriptures. Thus viewed, it is a *religious affection*, delighting itself

II. With being in general, but particularly fixing on God and men as its *objects*.

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We adore the GREAT FIRST CAUSE that he hath not left himself without witness. Look which way we will, we are agreeably arrested with the evidences of his existence. They stop and charm us with a truth that is Alpha and Omega ; the foundation of all religion and morality. This truth solves innumerable perplexities, and lays the foundation of our peace. From him creation, in all its vast variety, came—To him we are indebted for our being and blessings—By him the worlds are governed, and all events are directed to an end which infinite wisdom and goodness chose—To him are we accountable for every thing done in the body: therefore we should fear to sin.

Whatever darkness there may appear to us in his moral government ; and however long the wicked may triumph over the godly, justice at last shall have the most ample display ; and the difference there is between virtuous and vicious characters, be held up to the view of angels and men.

Let God be magnified, that a truth of such importance is addressed to the reason of every man ; as well to the unlettered Pagan, as to the most learned and enlightened Christian. *The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.* Therefore all men are without excuse. We look, and we believe.

believe. No man can doubt ; no man but a fool. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*—A consummate fool indeed is he.—

The perfections of this most glorious object shine around us. His power, wisdom and goodness are inscribed in legible characters on his works. We contemplate his eternity, immutability and faithfulness ; and adore him in the manifestation of his holiness, love and grace, which he hath made by Christ Jesus, *who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*

His character is transcendently excellent, therefore he is the only proper object of supreme love. To love him for what he is in himself, is most reasonable, and the highest exercise of true religion.

“ A perfect character, says an ingenious writer,* in which we always suppose infinite goodness, guided by unerring wisdom, and supported by Almighty Power, is the proper object of perfect love ; and though that character sustains to us the relation of a *benefactor*, yet the mind, deeply struck with that perfection, is quite lost amidst such a blaze of beauty, and grows as it were insensible to those minuter irradiations of it upon itself. To talk therefore of a *mercenary* love of God, or which
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* *Fordyce's Moral Philosophy.*

has *fear* for its principal ingredient, is equally impious and absurd. If we do not love the loveliest object in the universe for his own sake, no prospect of good or fear of ill can bribe our esteem, or captivate our love. These affections are too noble to be bought or sold, or bartered in the way of *gain*; *worth*, or *merit* is their object, and their reward is something similar in kind."——

The most striking display of the beauty of this character, is made in the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ. One great end of whose appearing in the flesh, was to make us better acquainted with the true God. *I have manifested thy name*, said Christ in an address to his Father, *to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world*. The term *name* in this verse is general, and intends the divine perfections at large. In this wonderful contrivance a foundation is laid for the sinner's hope of pardon and eternal life, and divine glory shines.

The ever blessed God not only commands us to love him with all our heart, but to *love our neighbour as ourselves*. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. That is, all true religion is comprehended in love: Hence he who thus loveth, is said *to fulfil the law*.

In the exercise of this charity we feel differently, toward different characters. Though

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all men belong to the universal family, and have a claim on our benevolence, and offices of kindness, we still feel, and it is right we should feel a complacency in some, in preference to others. This distinction of characters has its foundation in the nature of things, and in the oracles of God. He who pays a proper attention to it, discovers a virtuous taste, or that he has learned to estimate characters by their worth. Reason and religion forbid us to destroy it, or equally to regard the good and the bad. Vicious characters ought to have some mark of disapprobation fixed on them. It is right they should be made to feel the effects of their own folly and wickedness; because by such a conduct vice may be discouraged, and virtue promoted. Even benevolence will lead us to such a mode of treating different men. A benevolent man seeks the happiness of the whole; therefore he will do what he can to discountenance vice, because it is offensive to Deity, and destructive of human happiness. The proportion of misery in the system will always be according to the proportion of wickedness. These rise and fall together.

It is a divine injunction, that we should *do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith*. Why are we commanded to love those who *are of the household of faith*, meaning true christians, but because they

they are distinguished by some special excellence of character? Nor is this rule confined to the christian church, but adopted by all well regulated societies. Our brethren of the *Craft* always give the preference to a *brother*, especially to the most amiable. At the same time benevolence, while it marks the vicious man, forbids us to abandon him; rather presses us to pity and relieve him under certain circumstances. *Do good to all men*, is a sacred command.

III. We now naturally pass to consider the *effects* of that charity, which inspiration places in the front of the catalogue of moral virtues, or christian graces.

1. Supreme love to God, being in itself a right affection, and continually fixed on an object who is infinitely worthy of it, is inseparably connected with personal happiness. The man who loves his God with all his heart, finds that he is the only adequate good. Therefore he devoutly breathes the language of *David*, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* He who expressed himself thus, and felt as he said, was as happy as he could be in the present state of sin and imperfection. Having found the only object in heaven and on earth, that was worthy of his supreme affection, and capable of satisfying the vast desires of his immortal mind;

mind ; he anticipated, in degree, the happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect. In such a condition as this, the remaining wish of the good man, is that his love may be perfected ; because in perfect love, is perfect bliss.

2. Love to God promotes personal happiness, by leading us to endeavour to suppress, and totally to irradicate the evil propensities of our hearts ; the prevalence of which is ever fatal to our peace.

All the vicious passions carry misery with them. If anger rage—if resentment inflame us—if envy and malice, covetousness and hatred prevail in us, we are tormented. These horrid passions constitute a present hell : and should they remain, they will eternally prevent our enjoyment of that heaven, where all is holiness and love. To the absolute conquest of these lusts, and to the pursuit of perfect conformity to the divine character, love will lead us. We cannot serve two masters ; nor love objects that are infinitely opposed to each other, as sin and holiness are. Under the influence of divine love, we shall therefore labour to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

Love to God stands inseparably connected with love to man. This great duty of loving one another, is repeatedly urged in the holy scriptures. It is the second commandment in the law, and has a distinguished place in
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the list of apostolic exhortations. *By this,* says Christ, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye have love one to another. Let brotherly love continue—Let us love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth,* says an apostle. In this manner we are often addressed by inspired writers, who well knew the great importance of brotherly love to the happiness of society; which it uniformly promotes, in proportion to its influence; being attended in the

1. First instance, with *peace of mind*. It may be said of love to man, as hath been already said of love to God, that it is a *right affection*; and all right affections involve tranquility of heart. To feel right within is to feel happy. Consequently, when God commands us to love him supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves, he has respect to our felicity. His laws are not mere arbitrary mandates, issued for the sole purpose of displaying his authority over us; but they originate in his infinite benevolence, and their language is, *Do thyself no harm*. He commands nothing but what it is our interest to obey—He prohibits nothing but what it is our interest to abstain from. When he commands us to love himself or our brethren, it is that we may feel right; and of course be happy. How clearly must the truth of this remark appear to us, if we consider the misery that attends the prevalence of the criminal affections, or wrong tempers. For instance, if *passion* prevails we fret at Deity, are in a pet with every

every body, affront our best friends, and lay a foundation for bitter repentance. If envy, the happiness of others, in which we ought to rejoice, gives us pain. But if love has the ascendancy, we enjoy tranquility. *Charity suffereth long and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth, but shall ripen into perfection, and run parallel with eternity.*

2. Charity lifts us above national and religious distinctions, as soon as beneficence becomes a duty. It leads us to consider all men as brethren, to mourn with them who mourn, and to rejoice with them who do rejoice. If this affection prevails we shall quickly feel for objects in distress, and cheerfully contribute to their relief, without stopping a moment to ask, of what nation they are, or to what religious society they belong? The only question is, Are they the proper objects of our charity? Thus charity urges us to obey that divine injunction, *Do good to all men.*—

In all acts of hospitality the pleasure is reciprocal. The man who receives a kindness and he who does it rejoice together ! The former rejoices in relief from his distresses ; the latter
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in having effected it. This is one instance out of many, concerning which it may be said, that *in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.*

3. In a word, Charity leads us not only to acts of kindness, but to forgiveness of injuries; is meek and patient—supercedes all acts of violence—all wars and slaughter—all persecution for conscience sake—yea every thing that tends to destroy the happiness of others. For the universal prevalence of this important affection, every pious and benevolent man will devoutly pray.

By the preceding subject we are taught

1. That the essence of true religion is supreme love to God, and love to man: Without which we are nothing in the view of JEHOVAH. Our outward deportment may gain us the approbation of men; but God searcheth the hearts. Before him every man's breast is transparent; therefore he cannot be deceived. Let us then seriously examine ourselves, whether we have this charity that the text describes? No question is of equal importance with this, seeing it determines our condition for eternity.

2. The subject leads us to infer, that every institution that has charity for its grand object, merits our commendation and encouragement.

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In this light we are to view that *Fraternity* on whose account we are now together. FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY are professedly the *masons* motto.

Many and strange prejudices have been encouraged against this institution, by serious and well disposed persons. But with what propriety any man can condemn an institution, of which he is wholly ignorant, I leave every man to determine. We must be destitute of charity, if we can think that all the great and amiable characters that for ages past, and in different countries, have belonged to the *Craft*, were engaged to promote a wicked or a useless society. *Charity thinketh no evil.*

Concerning the *secrets* of masonry, I will observe, that charity obliges us to conclude, that these *secrets* are only useful to the *brotherhood*; because it is incompatible with that benevolence, on which all *Lodges* are founded; to keep that a *secret*, which, if revealed, would prove of *public utility*.

With the Constitutions of Masonry I profess myself acquainted; and am pleased to find, that by them, every mason is obliged to pay a strict attention to his morals—to the Lord's Day and public worship—to be chaste in his conversation while the Lodge is together—to avoid excess after it has broke up—to keep good hours, and carefully to attend to the government

government of his family, if he has one—that no immoral person is to be admitted—that all are obliged to encourage brotherly love, and to abound in acts of hospitality ; holding themselves always ready to help a distressed brother : and that in this society, men of different nations and religious sentiments, are united for the purposes of friendship and charity.—This being the case, Gentlemen, you will permit me to remind you of the great importance of acting according to your own Constitutions. Your laws are good. Study to be what they require, and you will have nothing to apprehend, either from malevolence or prejudice ; but meet the approbation of the wise and benevolent.

3. There cannot be a more proper occasion than the present, my brethren, to remind you, that to do good and to communicate, according to your several abilities, is a duty of religion and humanity : with such sacrifices, arising from a suitable temper of heart, God is well pleased. *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord : and that which he hath given him, will he pay him again.* The poor ye have always with you.

As you were informed the last Lord's-Day, that there would be a contribution to-day, for the poor of this town, I take it for granted that you have come properly provided for this

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pleasing service. Consult your ability and give accordingly. The time is come in which you are called upon to levy a tax upon yourselves —this will try your generosity, touch your feelings, and shew to yourselves what manner of spirit ye are of. “The Lord loveth a *cheerful giver* :” Not the niggard, the narrow soul, who parts with his money as he parts with his blood. How feel ye, my friends? are ye ready to distribute? Examples have a most powerful influence. Permit me then to hold up one to view that every man will applaud.

As St. *Evermond* was walking in one of the streets of Paris with a boy that waited on him, he was suddenly stopped by a man, who presented a pistol to his breast, and demanded his money. It was no time to hesitate : He accordingly delivered him four guineas, being the sum he had with him, reminding him at the same time of the danger he was in by such a mode of life. As the man appeared confounded, and not used to the business, he ordered his servant to watch him at a distance. He did so, then returned and informed his master, that he went first to a baker's and bought some bread, with which he proceeded to a miserable garret, where he had a wife and five children, who had every mark of the most extreme poverty and distress. When he entered the room he threw down the money and the bread, and

and in an agony cried out, I have obtained this supply for you at the risque of my life ; I fear that your distresses will finally prove my ruin. St. *Evermond* was greatly affected with this account of the unhappy man's condition, and next morning set off with his servant to conduct him. Upon his arrival in the neighbourhood he made enquiry concerning this man ; and was informed that he was poor and distressed ; a good workman, and behaved well. Upon which he passed on and went up into his room. As soon as the poor man saw him, he fell upon his knees, and with many tears confessed his crime, and begged forgiveness, supposing that he should now be apprehended, and brought to justice. But what were his feelings when St. *Evermond* thus addressed him—Rise, I am not come to injure you—here is a sum of money I give you to buy stock for your business, and to relieve your distressed family : and in any future necessity call on me, and I will help you, that you may never more be driven to so desperate an enterprize as that of the last night. What say ye, my friends, to this striking act of generosity ? Does not every heart feel its force, and beat high in praises of a mind so great and noble ? Then imitate his conduct ; *go ye and do likewise*. Thus spake our GRAND MASTER. To him we owe obedience, and every ascription of glory, dominion and praise.

